

THE LARGEST AND LONGEST FARM LABOR STRIKE IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY SINCE 1938

Nosotros Venceremos - We Shall Overcome

In a 400 square mile area halfway between Selma and Weedpatch, California, a general strike of farm workers has been going on for six weeks. The Filipinos, under AWOC AFL-CIO began the strike for a \$1.40 per hour guarantee and a union contract. They were joined by the independent Farm Workers Association which has a membership of several thousand Mexican-Americans.

Filipino, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican workers have been manning picket lines daily for 41 days in a totally non-violent manner. Ranchers in the area, which include DiGiorgio Fruit, Schenley, and many independent growers, did not take the strike seriously at first. By the second or third week, however, they began taking another look--and striking back. Mechanized agriculture began picketing the pickets--spraying them with sulfur, running tractors by them to create dust storms, building barricades of farm machinery so that scabs could not see the pickets. These actions not only increased the determination of the strikers, but convinced some of the scabs that the ranchers were, in fact, less than human. Scabs quit work and the strike grew.

The growers hired security guards for \$43 a day. They began driving their Thunderbirds, equipped with police dogs and rifles, up and down the roads. The people made more picket signs, drew in their belts, and kept marching.

Production was down 30% and the growers began looking for more and more scabs. They went to Fresno and Bakersfield and Los Angeles to find them. They didn't tell the workers that they would be scab crews. The pickets followed them into every town and formed ad hoc strike committees to prevent scabbing. They succeeded in these towns. Within two weeks, only one bus, with half a dozen winos, escorted by a pearl gray Cadillac, drove into the strike zone. A new plan was formed. The ranchers would advertise in south Texas and old Mexico. They bring these workers in buses and the workers are in debt to the rancher before they even arrive in town. We have a new and more difficult task ahead of us with these scabs.

As our strike has grown, workers have matured and now know why and how to fight for their rights. As the strike has grown into a movement for justice by the lowest paid workers in America, friends of farm workers have begun to rally in support of LA CAUSA. Civil rights, church, student and union groups help with food and money.

We believe that this is the beginning of a significant drive to achieve equal rights for agricultural workers. In order to enlist your full support and to explain our work to you, I would like to bring some of our pickets and meet with you.

VIVA LA CAUSA Y
VIVA LA HUELGA

Cesar Estrada Chavez
General Director,
National Farm Workers Association

C. Oct. 31?

